WHIRRAKEE

November 2000 Vol. 21 No. 10

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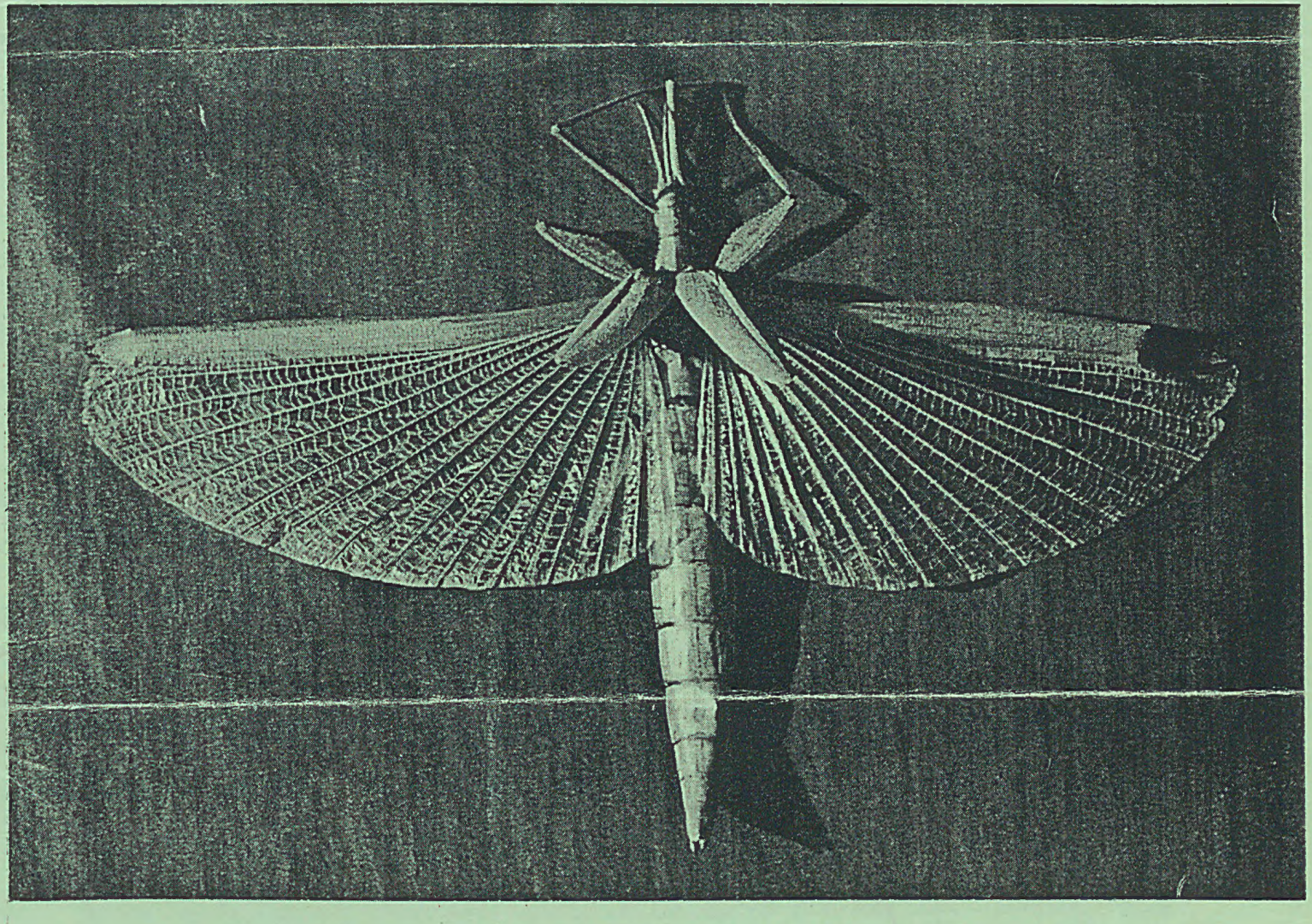

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.

Address for correspondence: PO Box 396, Bendigo 3552

Office Bearers for 2000 - 2001

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Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $34; Family $40; Concession: Single $28.50; Family $34. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $34. These rates include GST.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square. Meetings start at 7:30pm and conclude with supper. The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 7:30pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearers listed above, together with the following members: Darren Green; Maurie Lewis; Kate Lottkowitz; Phil Robertson; Bob Ruddick

Excursions The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, unless otherwise specified. Full-day excursions normally commence at 10am (usually on a Sunday); half-day excursions normally commence at 2pm and may be either on a Saturday or Sunday. Full-day or half-day excursions are usually held on the weekend following the General Meeting. Campouts are held several times each year, usually coinciding with long weekends or holiday periods.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club has 2 active sub-groups:

Bird Observers Group: meets on the first Friday of the month, at 7:30pm. The venue for meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building.

President: Anne Bridley
Secretary: Jane Cleary

Mammal Study Group: meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:30pm in the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building.

Chairman: John Burtonclay, Fadersons Lane, Mandurang (5439 5710)
Secretary: Bill Holsworth, 13 Nabilla Crs., Bendigo (5443 4063)
Equipment Officer: Maurie Lewis (0407 427179)

Front Cover: Photographer: Fred Watts

This photo shows a specimen of the pink-winged stick insect (or leaf insect). In their natural surounding it is rare to see them in flight (this specimen was dead when the photo was taken). Males are often smaller but have more functional wings than females (which are often flightless). Females drop their eggs from the trees straight onto the leaf litter where they hatch in the same season or years later depending on the conditions. In some species males are rare or unknown and nymphs (usually females) hatch from unfertilised eggs (a condition known as parthenogenesis). Some nymphs are brightly coloured, some mimic ants.....continued page 3

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club
Vol. 21, No. 10, November 2000
Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*) which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

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Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles.
Contributions will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although articles received more than one week after the monthly General Meeting will probably be too late for inclusion in the next issue of *Whirrakee*.
Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

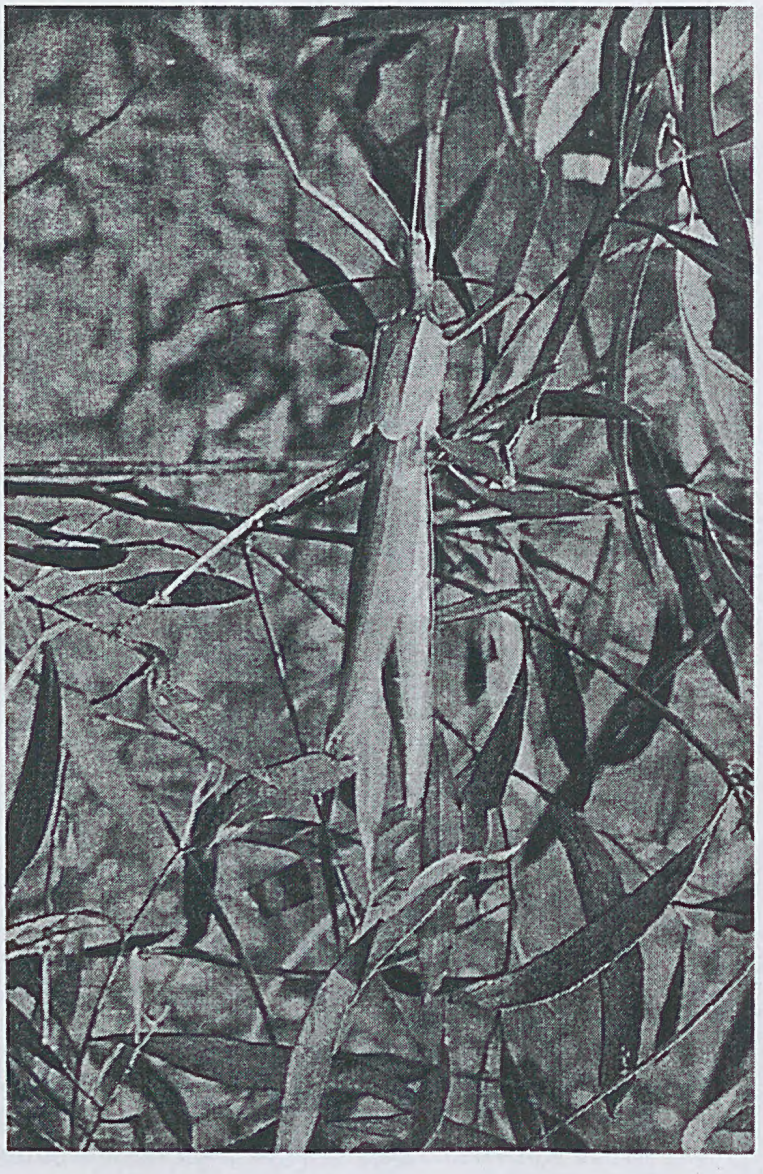
Editors' Note
We were not overwhelmed with offers of help for the two jobs advertised in the October Whirrakee. Especially the clean-up-the highway job did not attract any volunteers. A special introductory meeting at the Seven Sister Site has been organised for potential volunteers to identify the road side plants, have morning tea or a picnic and learn a bit about the clean-up job. See page 10 for details.
And another apology: In the last Whirrakee I got two letters mixed up and the result might have been a tad confusing. In this spot I announced that the BFNC had donated 300 dollars to the VNPA to support their activities for the Box-Ironbark forest and on page 10 of that issue announced that VNPA are collecting money for a bird habitat project. This was not correct. What I should have done is encourage members to also donate to the VNPA for activities related to the box-ironbark forest. The bird habitat project was a separate thing to which members are also encouraged to donate (to purchase land for the night parrot and other endangered birds). The VNPA is NOT collecting money for this bird habitat project, however I still have the brochures with the full story so please ring me if you are interested in that project. Apologies for all those who got confused. I certainly did.

For those people who have not paid their membership fees, a reminder is enclosed. Please pay promptly.

Phasmids from Inglewood

Author: Fred Watts

Some time ago our neighbour Mavis Needs brought over her latest find, a newly dead walking leaf insect or phasmid. I had photographed one of these phasmids before when it remained motionless in the leaves of a blue mallee sapling. So here was a good opportunity to open out the dead specimen's large and colourful wings and take a photo.
At some forgotten time we acquired a rather battered edition of William Gillies "First Studies in Insect Life in Australasia", price 1/3 and in this useful book there is a pencil sketch by McCoy of this insect, then named Pink-winged Phasma, also Walking Stick Insect and Walking Leaf Insect, and it seems that the two small flaps in front of the large wings of the dead specimen would be more expanded in flight.
I omitted to measure the insect's wing span but it was probably between 11 to 12 centimetres.



The photo on the left was taken in 1993, the only other time that the author has seen this insect (that time it was alive though and resting in the leaves of a eucalypt).

...continued from inside front cover:

In nature, numbers are usually low. This, together with their excellent camouflage, makes spotting these insects are rare occasion. In addition, many stick insects move incredibly slowly or only at night. They are preyed upon by birds and other insects, reptile and mammals. In the event of an attack, some startle the attacker by suddenly opening their brightly coloured wings or they drop to the forest floor or even hiss or kick with their spiny legs!

In Australia, three pest species are known that can defoliate whole forests when they reach plague proportions.

This information came from: Zborowski, P and Storey, R. 1995. A Field Guide to Insects in Australia. Reed Books. Chatswood, NSW.

Donation to the Club

Life Member Bob Allen has given the Club his herbarium collection of over a thousand pressed plant specimens and several boxes of books from his library. The herbarium collection will be catalogued and stored at La Trobe University (Bendigo). Some of the books and journals will be retained by the Club, others will be placed in appropriate libraries where they can be used by Natural History scholars. The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc. is grateful to Bob Allen for this generosity and the Bendigo Community will benefit for many years.

The Turtles of the Bendigo District.
Part Five: Turtle Watching

Author: Darren Green

Turtles that bask (or float) at the surface of the water, some distance from the shoreline, may be identified by the head shape, which is perhaps more apparent to the trained eye (eg. in an over-simplified way, *E.macquarii's* silhouette of the head is broad and triangular when protruding from the water, while the silhouette shape of *C.longicollis's* head may be mistaken for a stick). In addition, the neck stripe and bright yellow eyes may be seen through binoculars.

Egg Laying

Nests are searched for predominantly at night by torchlight, and to a lesser degree, during daylight hours. Signs of nesting include fresh remains of soils amongst the grass, obvious holes or debris (ie. grass, leaves, etc.) raked over not so obvious soil. A knife may be gently inserted into the site, feeling for the presence of eggs (much like poking the soil for china). Nest sites from previous years at Lake Weeroona were easy to identify. A shallow hole was left as a result of egg predation from rats (who dig up the eggs) and occasionally the nests were tunnelled out and made into homes for these rats. Rats and their "homes" (or tunnels) were more prevalent at known nesting sites of turtles and over several years caused considerable erosion to the shoreline. Some turtles had dug into the rat tunnels and deposited their eggs in the chamber below. Estimated predation of known turtle nests is estimated between 98 to 100%. Other Inhabitants of Lake Weeroona are a variety of water birds and introduced fish and it is assumed that these animals are predators of hatchling turtles, carp are able to suck hatchlings out of the mud or other hiding places. Juveniles are very secretive or mortality appears high as despite the number of juveniles returned to the lake after artificial incubation, only three have been re-captured over the study period.

Nesting is usually observed from mid-November to late December, at Lake Weeroona, after rainfall. A warm to hot day, followed with evening thunderstorms (or light rain in the case of drought years) will usually cause turtles to come on to land and begin nesting. This may initially begin with repeated excavation attempts after a series of disturbances (by humans or dogs) before nesting is finally achieved. A walk around Lake Weeroona just after dark is a good time to see turtles near the edge of the water, however it is much later that nesting will be attempted, particularly if they have been disturbed by your torch. Turtles may be encountered digging nests at around 10.00pm, it is best to spot them from a distance so as not to disturb them. Once the turtle has begun to lay eggs, one can walk up to the turtle from behind (the turtle is busy nesting, or as some may say they are in a trance-like state) and observed at close range. Try not to touch the turtle, shine the torch in its eyes, or move around in front of it as it may be sufficiently disturbed enough to leave the nest and return to the water. In this instance the eggs may remain exposed to predators, covering them will leave human scent behind and is a give-away for predators. The eggs are best removed for artificial incubation (see below), as any eggs that left in the ground at Lake Weeroona are not known to survive predation.

Artificial Incubation Techniques

There are several ways in which to artificially incubate turtle eggs, two methods will be described here. With both methods a container (eg. plastic lunch box, ice cream container) half filled with dampened vermiculite (available from hardware stores or nurseries) will be required. Initially the vermiculite is mixed with water at a ratio of 1 to 1 by weight (100g vermiculite to 100ml water) or 92% humidity. During incubation the vermiculite should be checked, adding water if the medium becomes too dry. Condensation should be present inside the container. If vermiculite is unavailable, dampened peat moss is the next best alternative, although it does tend to dry out over a shorter period of time.

The eggs are placed into the container where they are partially buried, leaving the upper surface of the eggs exposed. As a safety measure, never turn the eggs as this may harm the newly developing embryo. Place the lid back onto the container to keep the moisture in, and place the egg container into the incubator. The first incubating method is using an incubator purchased from a pet shop, or a home made version. The home made version is an insulated box (similar to an esky) which is heated by several light globes. A thermostat regulates the temperature by turning the globes on and off and

keeps the temperature at the right setting. Some incubators have fans to circulate the air.

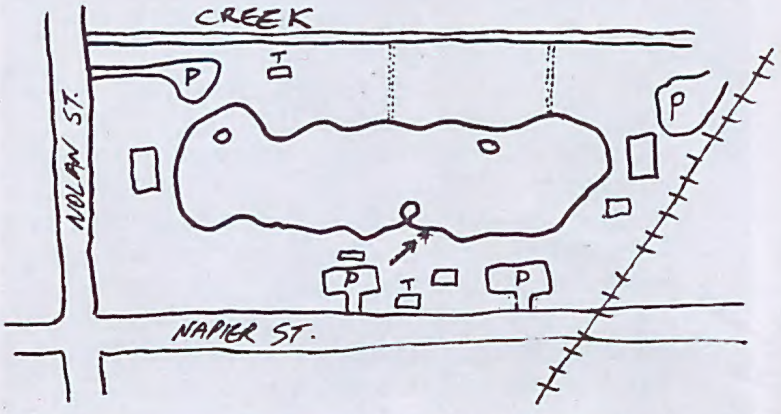
The second incubation method uses an aquarium (or plastic container as mentioned above) inside another aquarium. The smaller or inside aquarium contains the vermiculite and eggs, while the outer aquarium is partly filled with water where an aquarium heater is placed into the water and set to the right temperature. The heated water may need to be topped up on a regular basis due to evaporation (a lid on the aquarium will help reduce evaporation). Both incubation methods are successful in incubating turtle eggs, however should you regularly incubate eggs, the first method is the better alternative.

The incubator should be set around 29 to 30oC. Lower temperatures result in a longer incubation period, with embryos dying at temperatures that are too high (eg. over 32oC). Fertile eggs will produce a white patch on the upper surface of the egg. Over time this patch will form a band (or ring) around the centre of the egg and eventually spread out to cover the entire surface. Those eggs that do not band and cover the egg, or have "windows" should not be discarded unless they are discoloured, have a foul odour or are growing fungus which is a good indication that the egg is either infertile or dead. Some fertile eggs may die during incubation, usually from a lack of oxygen. When inspecting eggs ensure you remove the lid and gently fan the eggs several times to refresh the old or stale air, this allows the eggs to breathe. Once the eggs have hatched the juveniles should be returned to the wild where they are capable of fending for themselves.

Further Reading

CANN, J. (1998) Australian Freshwater Turtles, Cann & Beaumont Publishing, Singapore.
GREEN, D. (2000) Keeping Long-necked Turtles *Chelodina species*, Australian Reptile Keeper Publications, Bendigo.
GREEN, D. (2000) Keeping Short-necked Turtles *Emydura species*, Australian Reptile Keeper Publications, Bendigo.

Editor's Note
In the last article of this series (see October Whirrakee) on C. expansa, the Broad-shelled Turtle, I omitted to include the map of Lake Weeroona with the one nesting site mentioned in the article (marked by the arrow).



Spotlighting for Greater Gliders

The Mammal Study Group will be doing a spotlight survey of Greater Gliders in the Spargo area of Wombat State Forest south of Daylesford on 11 Nov. - **A Saturday night event.** -
Meet at the Club Rooms in Golden Square at 3 pm if you wish to car-pool, or at the Picnic area on the Bunding-Blakeville Road. The Picnic area is in the Werribee River watershed about 20 km south of Daylesford, or to be more exact, it is 4 km south of the Spargo Pub and 1 km from the main highway (Daylesford-Ballan Road). Arrive in time to have a walk through the forest before we fire up the BBQ. Bring your own everything for dinner.

After dark we will divide into small groups each with a spotlight and walk along the forest road and trails. Bring your own spotlight if you have one, and bring binoculars so you can get a really good look at these lovely large gliders. After about 2 hours of spot-lighting, and another cup of billy tea we will return to Bendigo (1:15 hours driving time). Alternatively you may wish to camp overnight. There are Caravan Parks in Daylesford, but I do not know if camping in the forest is allowed. Please make your own enquires.

For information on the Natural History of the Greater Glider read the article in the July 1995 Whirrakee.

If you plan to attend please contact Bill Holsworth (5443 4063) or Maurie Lewis (mobile 0407 427 179) to register your intention, and so that we can notify you if weather forces a change of plans.

From the Mailbag
Author: Elaine Mathison

Each month the club receives a number of newsletters and magazines: some by subscription and some in exchange for Whirrakee. These are available from the club library.

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THE BIRD OBSERVER(BOCA)
October 2000

"Songbirds' Nests" is a photographic anthology of varied constructed nests. Examples of the different types are given eg. freely suspended nests, small suspended cradles, very deep woven cups, and so on.

"The Summer of the Sunbirds" by Janet Robino describes the activites of a pair of Yellow-bellied Sunbirds at the writer's home. The birds built a nest hanging from wind-chimes, and needed some assistance to successfully rear their brood.

"Our Disappearing Birds" by Arnis Heislers provides an overview of activities threatening the habitat of endangered flora and fauna, including Victoria's Box-Ironbark forests and woodlands. Arnis comments that "the most severe impact of habitat degradation has been on ground feeding and nesting birds, caused by the loss of litter, logs, tussock grasses and other elements".

* * * * * * *

Also received recently:

*Castlemaine Naturalist(CFNC)
October 2000
*Geelong Naturalist(GFNC)
October 2000
*Newsletter(Ballarat FNC)
October 2000
*Natural Heritage(Nat.Heritage Trust)
Summer 2000
*Field Nats News(FNCV)
October 2000

* * * * * * *

Opportunity for Long-term Bird Study and other Long-term Monitoring

This offer from the property owner came to us via Hugo Phillips (Communications Officer, Birds Australia)

Flora and Fauna Research and Monitoring Project - Central Victoria (Murrindindi)

We have a 125 Ha moderately wooded property comprising mostly steep hills and gullies with some 20 Ha being native bushland. The property is essentially run as a cattle and sheep farm; however in recent years we have permanently fenced off from stock remnant bushland and a seasonal creek, and created a 20 m wide wildlife corridor along 1.5 km of hill-top ridge to join with native bushland. On the flatter section there is a 2 y.o. "sandwich" blackwood and blue gum plantation subject to ongoing timber research; and in addition there are approximately 1000 ironbark trees 1-3 years old. A small wetland has been created in a naturally swampy area, with surrounds planted with a mixture of eucalypts. The property is accredited "Land for Wildlife", and there are already many native animals and birds.

As the wetland "matures", and the plantations trees grow, in particular the ironbarks, we are interested in properly monitoring changes in flora and fauna, but especially in bird life. As a result we seek people or organisations interested in using the property for appropriate long-term research studies. We envisage this would comprise a comprehensive inventory of current species together with seasonal and/or annual reviews over a long period to identify changes, but we are open to ideas.

If anyone is interested, the property owner can be contacted on Ph/Fax 03 98360723, or through Mike Weston of the Threatened Bird Network at Birds Australia on 03 9882 2622 or email m.weston@birdsaustralia.com.au

October General Meeting,
Soils of Bendigo, Speaker: Nathalie Baxter

Author: Sabine Wilkens

This talk consisted of a very elegant power point presentation, without technical hitches (almost unheard of!). It was a very well illustrated run-down of the relatively new Australian soil classification system with reference to Bendigo and surrounds.
Nathalie first introduced some general terminology, the topsoil (or A-horizon), the subsoil (or B-horizon), the weathered rock beneath (or C-horizon) and the solid rock (R-horizon).
She then went on to give some characteristics of a vertical soil profile,
• its **colour** which is an indication of the degree of drainage and the amount of oxygen available for reactions
• its **structure** which relates to the amount of pore space amongst the particles and aggregates
• its **texture** which refers to the sand, silt and clay content of the various horizons
and its **soil depth** and **stone content**.
All of these characteristics will impact on the nutrient and water-holding capacity of the soil, what plants can and cannot be grown in it and what management is necessary to keep it there.

The Australian Soil Classification system supersedes the Northcote system which classified soils as "duplex", "gradational" and "uniform".
In the new system there are 13 orders as shown in the diagram on the next page (this was kindly supplied by Nathalie). The character of the B-horizon is the main determinant of their classification.

Organosols are high in organic matter. They are found in alpine areas and other unusual environments. They are wet most of the time and if drained and cultivated extensively, they can change to a different soils (e.g. vertisol)

Rudosols are soils that barely exist (rudimentary). Thin layers on top of the granite boulder area of Harcourt is one local example. Our local bush soils, thin as they are, are still not rudosols however.

Tenosols have little pedological organisation, i.e. they do not look like soils e.g. sand on dunes.

Podosols occur on old dunes. They consist mainly of sand and therefore have a poor water retention, low fertility and are susceptible to wind erosion. They often occur over a perched water table and may be seasonally waterlogged. They are commonly coloured due to accumulated iron and organic matter.

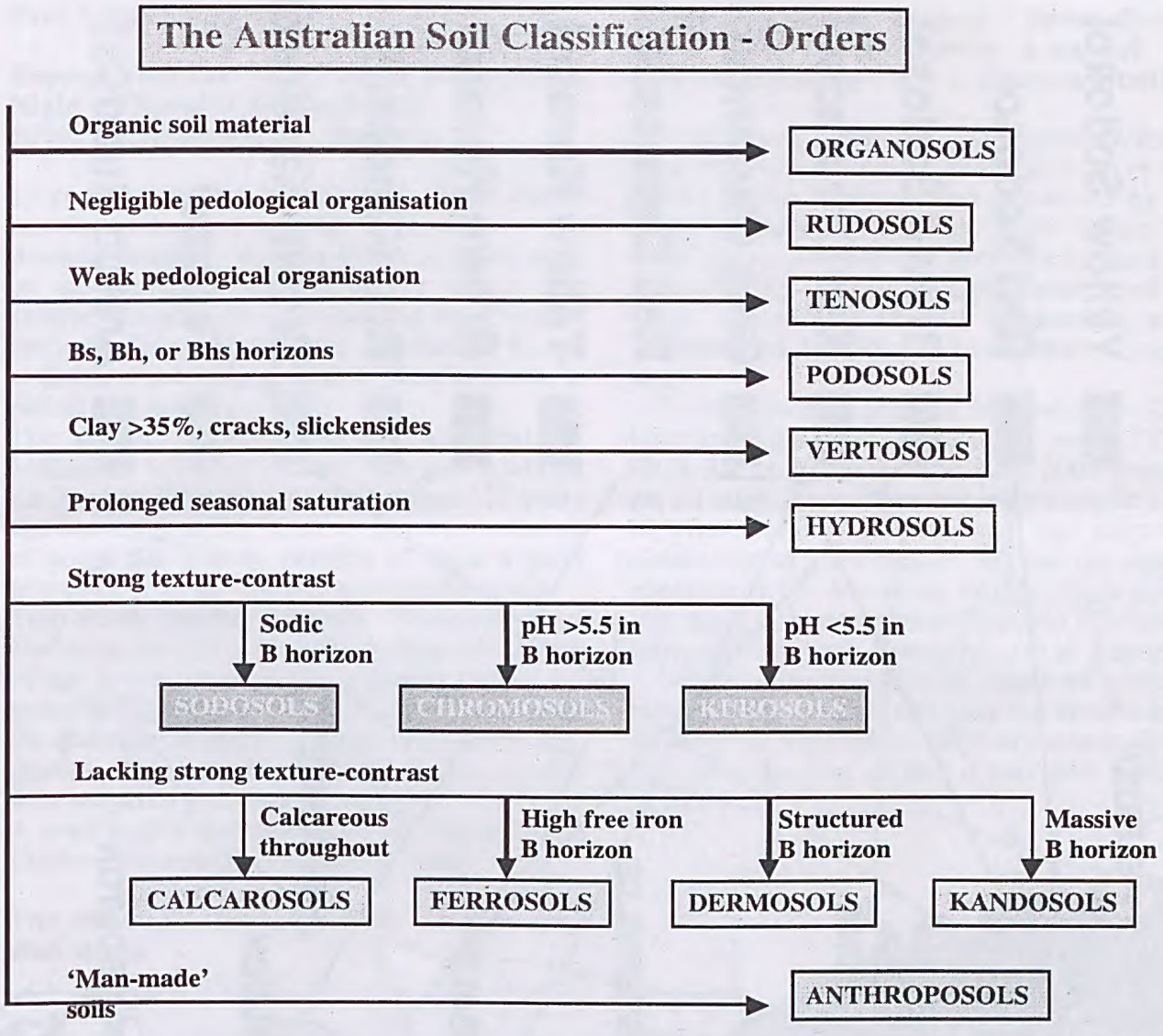
Vertisols are cracking clay soils which can shrink and swell depending on their water status. They are susceptible to compaction and may have low drainage. Some soils around Bendigo are vertisols and they can be used for cropping, grazing and irrigation agriculture.

Hydrosols experience long seasonal saturation and may have saline water tables. If cultivated for grazing or dairying, they require artificial drainage

The **Sodosols, Chromosols** and **Kurosols** were called duplex soils in the old Northcote system.
The Sodosols are high in exchangeable sodium and percentage sodium. They disperse easily in water and this property is responsible for the tunnel and gully erosion found around Bendigo as well as surface crusting. They can exhibit impeded drainage but can be used for grazing.
The Chromosols have a pH above 5.5 and are thus neither acidic nor sodid.
The Kurosols are acidic with pH below 5.5. They may exhibit toxic levels of aluminium and may need to be limed if cultivated.

The Northcote soils referred to as 'gradational soils' are those that lack distinct boundaries between the horizons. In the new system they are referred to as **Calcarosols, Ferrosols, Dermosols** and **Kandosols**.
The Calcarosols have a high carbonate content, they can be highly alkaline and exhibit surface crusting but are suitable for irrigated horticulture (e.g. Grape vines). The Ferrosols are well structured and well-drained, generally acidic (which may become exacerbated under cropping) and have a high free iron content,

There were many questions and comments showing that this topic, although not appearing very exciting on the outside, inspires many people. We need more of it!



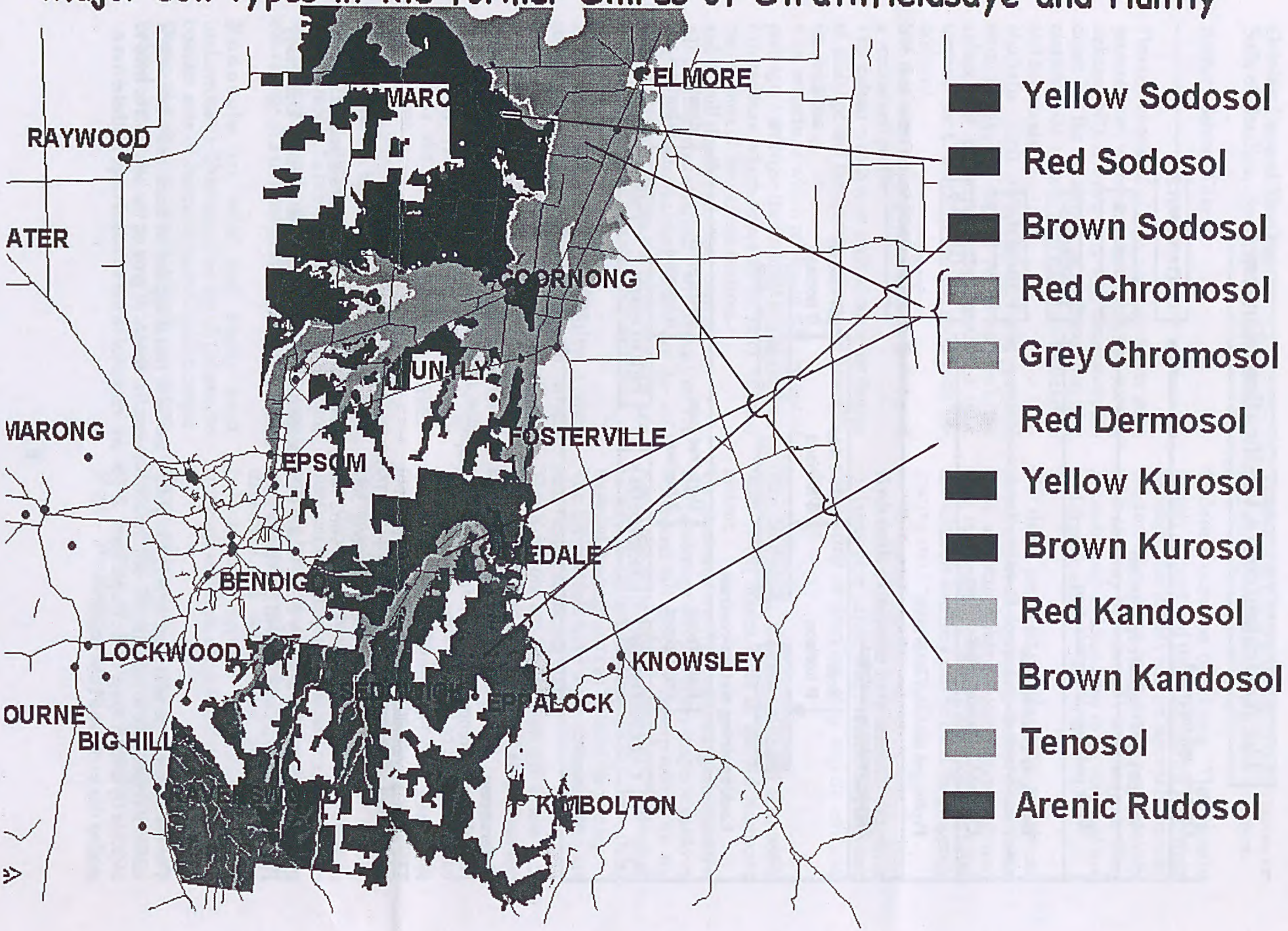
References:
Nathalie has recommended two references on the topic:

R.F. Isbell. 1996 The Australian Soil Classification CSIRO Australia.
The book is available from: CSIRO Publishing
PO Box 1139 (150 Oxford St)
Collingwood 3006
Tel. (03) 9662 7666, fax (03) 96627555, email: sales@publish.csiro.au

Charman P.E.V. and Murphy B.W. Soils their properties and management. Sydney University Press in association with Oxford University Press Australia.

The soil map on the next page is only marginally useful in that it appears in black and white which makes it impossible to pick the fine differences between the shades of grey on the key. I have tried to indicate by arrows some of the major soils. If you are interested in the coloured map, Nathalie has e-mailed this to me and I can pass it on.

Major soil types in the former Shires of Strathfieldsaye and Huntly



Tree Information Night

Report from the Tree Project Information Night – Thursday September 21
BFNC Representative Bob Ruddick

18 people attended this meeting. Greg Ralton introduced the guest speakers which were **Annette Salkeld**. Annette is the only paid staff on the project at the Melbourne office, she showed some slides of beginning and finished projects. One project in the Strathbogie Range at Gobor showed the growth of the plants over a period of five years.
The second speaker was **Megan Blair**, a Melbourne volunteer grower. She gave a talk on the history of the tree planting group. 12 years ago two women, depressed by the news bulletins of doom and gloom, decided to make a good news story and get together to form the group.
The third speaker, **David Nielson** from Greening Australia also talked about the history of the group. The major problem facing the group at present is the lack of a seed source for the endangered species such as understorey and grasses. This was confirmed by the last speaker who was from the Bendigo region..
A seed supply operation will be started in the Castlemaine area on 160 acres of land.

The meeting finished with supper and discussions.

From the Bendigo Advertiser...

On Saturday October 21 the Bendigo Advertiser ran an article in the *Weekender* section titled "Growing Devastation" (author unknown). This article stated that in the opinion of Tim Low, a Brisbane environmental consultant and author of numerous books on Australian plants, gardening damages Australia's environment more than mining. According to Tim Low, a bio-invasion largely through nurseries, pet shops and home and botanical gardens posed a $ 6 billion a year threat which was more ominous than greenhouse gases, industrial pollution and ozone depletion. He said there were about 2700 types of weeds in Australia, about 30% of which had come in as garden plants. One example given was mimosa, a weed that has been invading the top end and threatening Kakadu. Darwin Botanic gardens are thought to have been the source of this species of mimosa.

Adopt a Highway Project - Seven Sisters Area (Whirrakee Wattle Area) of the Midland Highway - 2 to 5 Km past Huntly.

For the past 2 years Rob and Cynthia Watkins have been organising the litter clean-up of this stretch of the Highway that is marked by the Adopt-a-Highway "Bendigo Field Naturalists Club" signs. They would now like to hand the responsibility over to younger members of the Club. According to our agreement with VicRoads we should pick up the litter 4 times a year.

To introduce all possible volunteers the Club is organising a PLANT SURVEY and LITTER PICK-UP on SUNDAY 26 Nov. 2000 from 10 am till noon. It is proposed that we compile a list of plants along the roadway and map the distribution of a few species. We will pay special attention to the Whirrakee Wattle which makes that area, and indeed, the proposed Whipstick National Park, such a beautiful area in August.

While compiling a list of plants we will also pile a load of rubbish and have the area looking good for the December- February season. Bring your own morning tea and, if you wish, a picnic lunch.

BFNC submission in response to the Box-Ironbark Forest and Woodland Investigation (Preliminary Report)

The Executive Officer
Environment Conservation Council
3rd Floor, 250 Victoria Parade
East Melbourne
Vic 3002

Dear Sir,

In our earlier submission on land-use in the Box-Ironbark forests we requested a Greater Bendigo National Park incorporating all of the forested Public Lands surrounding urban Bendigo.

In the Draft Recommendations we were 'offered' a Bendigo Regional Park incorporating some of this forest ring but failing to include all of the Wellsford Forest - the largest contiguous block of Box-Ironbark forest in the region. This forest is too important to the conservation of Box-Ironbark forests to be subdivided in this fashion - it should all be included in a park category which gives it better protection than its present status as a State Forest and we urge you to reconsider the present recommendation and properly conserve all of the Wellsford State Forest by including it in the enlarged Regional Park proposed.

During the initial submission phase of this review, we (deliberately) did not request that the Kamarooka and Whipstick State Parks should be up-graded to National Park status because early indications were that this would only have become a distraction. It would have appeared that this involved merely a name change for the existing State Parks to National Parks. If this was all that could be achieved then there would have been no substantive increase in the area of forest conserved as either State or National Park and there would have been no significant gain except in the prestige value of the new status.

Because these 2 categories had effectively the same conservation status, there was much less urgency in achieving this change of name and status than in gaining significantly better protection for ordinary State Forests surrounding Bendigo. We did, however, request that the Whipstick and Kamarooka State Parks should be augmented by the State Forests which adjoin them and that the Eaglehawk Regional Park and its surrounding forests should also be incorporated into an enlarged Whipstick and Kamarooka State Park. We are very pleased that this recommendation has been accepted and commend the ECC for this vision.

At this later stage of the review process, however, it now seems more appropriate to request that the land recommended as additions to the Bendigo Regional Park (including, importantly, the whole of the present Wellsford State Forest) together with the enlarged Whipstick and Kamarooka State Park should become the Greater Bendigo National Park. This would more properly achieve the principal objective of providing secure protection of the conservation values of this significant single block of our regional Box-Ironbark forests.

The major management issues which will arise have been canvassed already in letters to the editor of the Bendigo Advertiser - all can be dealt with as issues for the managers of the new National Park but some are relatively trivial and can be dismissed as follows:

1 Restrictions on various recreational uses (dog-walking; horse-riding; gold-fossicking are those which have received the most attention) in a new National Park could be easily dealt with by zoning the new park to permit some or all of these activities in areas adjoining urban areas (it would also be feasible and sensible to zone such areas as Regional Park within the National Park - this may not be the usual practice but this proposed National Park would be unique in any case, surrounding a major provincial city!). Other National Parks already have various regional variations to cater for special regional activities, for example: Horse Trail-riding in the Alpine National Park; 4WD use of tracks in some sections of some National Parks; quarrying and mining at some locations etc.).

2 Loss of access by gold mining companies who wish to explore for gold and to eventually mine significant deposits if they are discovered. We acknowledge that all of the Box-ironbark forests are already covered by Exploration Licences (in this region and, also, over most of Victoria). We propose the following solution to the gold mining companies' desire for exploration access (only

for the new areas of the National Park but not for the areas previously conserved as State Park and already protected from exploration and mining):

The Gold Mining Lobby requests continued exploration access to the Box-Ironbark forests on public land for an unlimited time. Recognising that Exploration Licences already exist over all of the State Forests in this region, we offer the following proposition - a useful compromise would be to declare a new National Park which encompasses all of these State Forests around Bendigo, which permits exploration for gold under stringent conditions (absolute minimal disturbance; full restoration; large Bond; 5 year Sunset Clause for unused exploration permits - such unused areas would then become fully protected from future exploration and/or mining) and if gold is discovered after drilling and sampling investigations, then shaft mining or, preferably, decline mining from outside the forested area may be permitted under stringent conditions (disposal of waste soil, rock and water must be outside the forested area; minimal loss of forested land at the shaft entrance; all buildings to be sited outside the forest; large restoration Bond etc.).

3 The other aspect always overlooked in this context is the Box-Ironbark Myth propagated by gold mining companies and also by clay and gravel quarrying interests:
Clay and Gravel Mining could be shifted out of the remnant forest and onto areas of surrounding land which are already cleared. It is a myth that clay, gravel and gold occur only under the remnant Box-Ironbark forests of this region - the remnants are only the remaining 15%, the other 85% which is already cleared and in many cases is unproductive land, also covers deposits of clay, gravel and possibly gold. Those who are interested in extracting these resources find it much cheaper and much easier to deal with the Government Department which is responsible for management of the remnant Box-Ironbark forests, little or no royalty is payable and very small amounts are set aside for reclamation compared to the compensation which would need to be negotiated with freehold title owners - hence the origin of the Box-Ironbark myth.

4 Displacement of the firewood and fence-post forestry activities:

Firewood harvesting is a particularly damaging use of public Box-Ironbark forests which could be phased out and replaced by a plantation-based firewood industry on already cleared, marginal or unproductive agricultural land (as discussed at the recent National Firewood Conference in Bendigo). Some ecological thinning of overcrowded forests in their presently degraded state could also ease the transition from Box-Ironbark forests to private plantations. Also, fence posts and sleepers are harvested from the largest and oldest remaining trees and perpetuate the present degraded state of our forests with thin, young regrowth being the typical state of the forestry resource base which is allowed to remain in our Box-Ironbark forests (several other options exist already which are justifiable on economic grounds and avoid the continual destruction of the larger, older trees in our forests).

In conclusion, while we are pleased that some aspects of our earlier submission have been accepted, we wish to encourage you to go much further to ensure that these important forest remnants are properly recognised for their conservation values and that they are securely conserved by increasing the size of existing State and National Parks, in particular, by accepting our recommendation that there should be a Greater Bendigo National Park which incorporates all of the Box-Ironbark forests on public land surrounding the Bendigo Urban Area. Accepting this recommendation would go much further towards achieving the objective of protecting the last 15% of this forest type, if only in this immediate area.

Yours sincerely,

Rodney Orr
President, Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.
PO Box 396
Bendigo 3552

6 August 2000

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.

Speaker Syllabus for General Meetings – Second Wednesday 7:30 pm

Date – 2000	Topic	Speaker
8 November	**Australian Snails**	**Brian Smith** Curator Emeritus. Museum of Victoria Honorary Research Fellow, LaTrobe University, Bendigo
13 December	**Christmas Dinner**	There will be no speaker this month but there will be some form of entertainment provided.

N.B. New Syllabus for 2001

Bill Holsworth is currently putting together the speaker syllabus for 2001. If you have any suggestions, know any interesting topics or speakers, please let Bill know in the next week or two.

Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.
W.R.I.N. is an organisation dedicated to the care of orphaned, sick or injured native animals.
It is fully endoresed by the Dept of Natural Resources and Environment.
Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need. Phone: 0419 35643

Advance Notice

VFNCA 2001 March Camp
Rawson - Central Gippsland 9-12 March 2001
Hosted by the Latrobe Valley Field Naturalist Club Inc.
see page 11 of the October *Whirrakee* for details

Advance Notice

Fenner Conference on the Environment 2001
Biodivesity conservation in Freshwaters - same landscape, different perspective 508th July 2001
hosted by the Australian Academy of Science and the Co-operative Research Centre for Freshwater Ecology in Canberra

Diary

The General, Bird Observers Group and Mammal Survey Group meetings are held at the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

General Meeting

Wednesday, November 8, 7:30pm
The speaker for this month meeting is Dr Brian Smith, Curator Emeritus, Museum of Victoria, Honorary Research Associate at La Trobe University, Bendigo. Brian has only recently moved to Bendigo. This talk will give us a chance to get to know one of our newest members (and, judging by the title of the talk, we might find out something about snails as well...).

Wednesday, December 13, 6:30pm
Christmas Dinner at the Club Rooms
Bring Salad, Casserole or Desert. Come early to inspect the garden then sit down at 6:30pm to dinner. Bring your own Christmas spirit (however, some other entertainment is also provided).

Garden Working Bee

November 12, 9am - 12noon.
The garden plants have grown extremely well this spring, but so have the weeds, thus weeding is the main job in November.
Please bring your favourite weeding tool (and maybe a mat of something to kneel on).
It should be a pleasant morning.

Spring Cleaning of Clubrooms

This annual event will take place on Saturday 16th December 9 am till 12 noon.
Please come and help make the place look lovely.
Following the Spring Cleaning, members may go on to Jack Ipsen's for the Annual Christmas Picnic. See below for details.

Christmas Picnic/BBQ lunch at Lyel Glen.

Jack Ipsen has once again, invited members to join him in the Annual Christmas lunch at his property at Lyel Glen near Redesdale,
Please bring all your food and drink as well as a chair (if you need one). There are plenty of interesting things to see before you sit down for lunch.
The property is at the corner of Managans Lane and Redesdale Road. If you intend to go but need more detailed instructions, please ring Glenise Moors (5439 6254)

Supper

Following club meetings, the usual arrangements for supper are as follows: members either bring a plate or pay $1 for supper. This small amount is used to reimburse members who purchase essential supper supplies.

Bird Observers Group

November (date to be confirmed)–
Tang Tang Wildlife Reserve.

December 3– Marong State Forest.

Atlassing Excursions are conducted on the first Sunday of every month.
Meet 9am at the Clubroom, this is a half-day excursion.
Please contact Anne Bridley (ph. 54 493479) if attending.

Spotlighting for Greater Gliders

On Saturday November 11, the Mammal Study group will be travelling to the Spargo Creek area (near Daylesford) to go spotlighting for Greater Gliders.
See page 5 for details.

Other Events

VNPA Family Picnic

Sunday 12 November 11am to 4pm at Westerfolds Park in Templestowe (Melway map 33F2)
BYO picnic, rug or chair. There are gas BBQs on the site. Tea and coffee will be available.

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